

COMMENT

TO THE WEB-BASED CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT FIRST REPORT OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) INDEPENDENT HIGH-LEVEL COMMISSION ON NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS)

The IFA thanks the WHO Independent High-level Commission on Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) for providing the opportunity to provide comments to the Draft First Report and agrees with the need for increased political commitment and accelerated implementation of actions to address NCDs. With specific focus on the pledge to leave no one behind, the IFA has the following general comments for the present report.

Recalling the WHO's statistics on NCD morbidity and mortality, it should be noted that older persons are disproportionately impacted and that the global burden of NCDs increases with age. Concurrently, ageist attitudes present older persons with added barriers to accessing necessary services to manage their health and maintain their autonomy and independence throughout life.

With these factors in mind, the IFA calls on the Commission to amend the report to include older persons and healthy ageing, with the aim of promoting intrinsic capacity and functional ability across the life course. The omission of older persons and healthy ageing within the report and its recommendations is surprising considering the relevance to NCD-related policy issues such as screening, treatment, and palliative care.

The WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs can utilize existing examples and resources to develop stronger recommendations for action. Firstly, there should be reconsideration of the true meaning of "premature" – dying from NCDs earlier than necessary, in the absence of treatment; or dying at an earlier age than expected because of NCDs. If the latter, what age is considered "premature"? The upper age cut-off has already been removed for Indicator 3.4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which measures the mortality rate attributed to NCDs. To reaffirm the life course approach, the IFA recommends the use of "preventable" death rather than "premature".

Furthermore, the report can also be amended to match the present draft of the WHO's 13th General Programme of Work (GPW), which has acknowledged the importance of promoting healthy ageing through measures such as aligning health systems to the needs of older populations. The GPW has also included an indicator on access to universal health care by older persons.

Finally, guided by the World Report on Ageing and Health as well as the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, the WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs can amend the report to take a life course perspective thus offering more comprehensive and long-term solutions for the prevention and management of NCDs. This would help the Report to be in line with the principle to leave no one behind, as promoted by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.